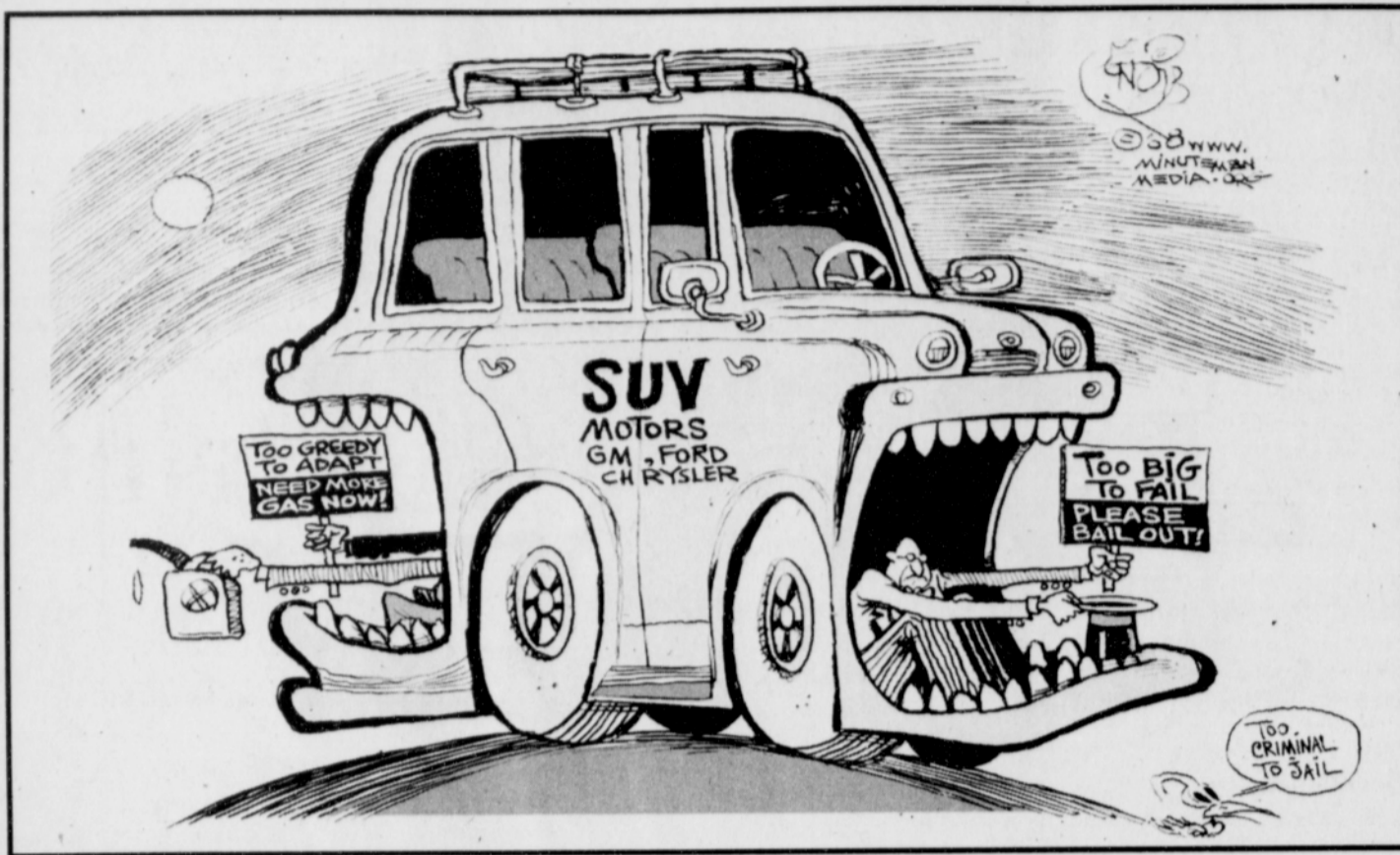


OPINION

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Finding My Voice through a Ballot

A generation coming to age

BY JORDYN LIVINGSTON-ESQUIBEL

I believe that my generation will be the first to aggressively change the direction this country is heading.

We have for the most part been raised by parents who witnessed or participated in the largest call for action thus far in American history, the civil rights movement.

To think that older generations would wonder why my generation has become so passionately involved seems oblivious to me. I have grown up watching ballots being recounted for what seemed like months, and planes crashing into buildings. This is the first election I have been able to participate in.

As I watched the results scroll across the screen and the minutes

turn into hours, I felt my heart speeding up and my palms getting sweaty. The stage was set for a gender and racially driven election in the primary: A black man, a woman and a Hispanic man all running for the most powerful position in America.

My generation recognized from the first time Barack Obama was on Oprah that our voices had to be heard.

Voting was created as a privilege that only some could participate in, but now I feel my generation has made voting a part of who you are. Politics has grown from something talked about every four years to becoming imbedded in my culture and identity.

Voting is no longer a private thing but is now a base for where one's morals stand.

Since our country was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001 I have felt that my generation has stepped up and

called for change. The difference between now and in the 1960s civil rights movement is that my generation has decided to work from the inside out.

We did not try and impeach George W. Bush or walk on Washington; we have decided to use the first voting powers we have as our voice. We witnessed the most vicious attack on our country to date and have had to live in fear of what is next to come.

Living in the dark about the level of security I have in my own house and being too young to feel like I can make a difference has made me feel like my country is in a state of crisis.

Because of this constant state of fear, people in my generation have tried to become as politically aware as possible. There is not a place on my campus that I can talk about politics without someone from my generation wanting to

share their opinion. I do not know anyone my age who did not vote.

When I received my ballot in the mail, I felt a sense of empowerment like I have never felt before.

I always heard that my voice counted but I have never felt like I could make a difference. This election has proved, as Barack Obama said, that my generation, the people from 18 to 25, have a big impact on how this country is going to be run.

The fact that my generation was a part of electing the first black president says a lot about what our agenda is and how we see this country emerging.

I feel as though as my country is coming to age, that I am coming of age as well and so is my entire generation.

Jordyn Livingston-Esquebel is student at Portland State University.

Clarity of the Moment

Obama's election defines our time

BY ALGIE GATEWOOD

Every few generations there comes an event that for better or worse transcends the ordinary and is written indelibly in our hearts and minds. At such times, our entire society — sometimes even the whole world — is transfixed, either in horror or in joy by the singular power and clarity of the moment.

Nov. 4, 2008, was one of those moments.

Consider the pivotal events of our times: Sept. 11, 2001; the fall of the Berlin Wall; the moon landing; the March on Washington; the assassinations of Dr. King, and the Kennedy brothers. Going back further — the end of the Second World War or the attack on Pearl Harbor — there are the moments that define our times, events that by their sheer cultural mass cause us to re-evaluate our place in the world. They form the lens through which we view everything that comes after.



lently.

With each passing generation, the circle of equals has grown. We abolished slavery and banished Jim Crow. We extended the right to vote to all adult Americans, regardless of race, creed, color, or gender. We have actively worked to elevate people from non-mainstream communities into the realms of business, government, and education.

But as clearly as we can see the progress we have made, we can just as plainly see the work that remains to be done. Women still earn less than men for doing the same work. People of color are still overrepresented in our prisons, underrepresented in our boardrooms, and more likely to drop out of school. A vast underclass still labors, sometimes illegally, at the jobs that "real" Americans won't do. Too much wealth is still concentrated in the hands that have controlled it for centuries.

Sometimes, though, a moment

Think of it! A man from humble beginnings, the son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, has taken his place among the great.

For better or worse, everyone who lived through those moments remembers exactly where he or she was and exactly what he or she was doing. So brightly are these events seared in our memories that without much effort it is easy to summon the feeling of elation or of dread that accompanied them.

Nov. 4, 2008, was one of those moments.

Unlike, say, being German, African, or Japanese, being an American has always been more about an idea than about where your ancestors came from or what your last name might be. Being an American means that you can be judged not by what family or social class you're born into, but by what you say and accomplish. Being an American means that you are bound only by the limits you place on yourself. Or so we have been told, generation after generation.

There are those of us, however, who know from experience that the idea of being an American is something that hasn't always been extended to everyone. There are those of us who remember a time when the difference between marginalized Americans and "real" Americans was as plain as the "Whites Only" sign above the door. Tragically, there are many of us who feel that difference still.

It could be said with some accuracy that one of the central narratives of the American experience is the struggle to live up to the transcendent ideals enshrined by the Founders, to ensure that the idea of being American applies equally to everyone. And to our credit, we have waged that struggle unre-

comes along where the scales drop from our collective eyes and we see just how close to hand Dr. King's dream really is. The blood, toil, tears and sweat sacrificed by generations past and present are suddenly redeemed and it is revealed to us in blinding synchronicity how far we have come.

Nov. 4, 2008, was one of those moments.

We, the American people, have elected a president named Barack Hussein Obama!

Think of it! A man from humble beginnings, the son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, has taken his place among the great. A man who for his entire life embraced education and hard work as the foundation of his success. A man who through his own merit and enterprise rose to attend Harvard Law — where he was named president of The Harvard Law Review — assumed a prestigious professorship — and ran successfully for state and national government.

A man who endured the bile and vitriol of an embittered, declining racist establishment, who was shamefully called a terrorist, whose character was subjected to every imaginable smear — his middle name is Hussein! — ascended to the White House on the shoulders of his fellow Americans.

His fellow Americans — all of us, together.

Nov. 4, 2008, was one of those moments and the joy of it shows no sign of fading.

Algie Gatewood is president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus.

A Shift in Our Politics and Priorities

Celebrating a historic victory

BY REP. CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK

America is witnessing an unimaginable triumph. Sen. Barack Obama has been elected to serve as 44th President of the United States of America and the first African American to guide our nation.

This monumental victory represents a significant shift in our nation's politics and priorities. It signals that we have made great strides in breaking down racial and cultural barriers that have historically paralyzed the full participation of all Americans.

Now, little boys and girls across the country can truly dream without limitations and actualize the true promise of this great land. When a young child of color aspires to one day be the President of



the United States, we can assure them, Yes, you can!

By issuing the clarion call of change, President-

education and health care systems along with protecting American liberties both at home and abroad, amassed great support and helped clinch the election.

Principally, Senator Obama ral-

When a young child of color aspires to one day be the President of the United States, we can assure them, Yes, you can!

elect Barack Obama's message resonated with American voters from the channels of cyberspace, the cornfields of Iowa, the everglades of Florida to the peaks of Virginia.

For 21 months, he mobilized our hopes for a stronger and more unified America by concisely articulating his plan to make the working class central to an economic recovery plan. His sensible strategy for revamping our nation's

lied broad coalitions by underscoring the importance of inclusion, while debunking divisive and destructive devices.

The Obama campaign successfully expanded the electorate, set fundraising records, encouraged early voting and strategically engaged over 40 million youth voters from all across the country. His vision for a new America has transcended time and place.

On Jan. 20, when President-elect

Barack Obama stands with his family and raises his right hand and places his left on the Bible, he will take his God-ordered place in history as the 44th President of the United States of America.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus are extremely proud and humbled by this awesome accomplishment. We look forward to working with President-Elect Obama to build a stronger, healthier and more just America.

We are honored to call President-Elect Barack Obama, our brother, our colleague, our advocate and soon Mr. President. We extend our congratulations to Michelle, and their daughters Malia and Sasha. May God continue to bless them as we move forward as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Carolyn C. Kilpatrick, D-Mich., is chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus.



Thanksgiving is a family holiday...

No one understands the importance of family more than us. We are a family, serving families... and that goes a long way toward appreciating what a holiday like Thanksgiving means. As your family gathers this holiday season, remember to give thanks for these precious moments together.

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